

## Document Information

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### Owner

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### Distribution

Name	Position	Responsibility
DE Permanent Secretary	DE Accounting Officer	Approval
Sean Pettis	NICE Chief Executive/Accounting Officer	Approval
Eammon Quinn	NICIE Chair	Approval

**Partnership Agreement between  
Department of Education and the Northern  
Ireland Council for Integrated Education**

**Version 1.7 April 2026**

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## Introduction

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### 1. The Partnership Agreement

- 1.1 This document sets out the partnership arrangements between the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (**NICIE**) and the Department of Education (**DE**). It explains the overall governance framework within which NICIE operates, including the framework through which the necessary assurances are provided to stakeholders. Roles/responsibilities of partners within the overall governance framework are also outlined.
- 1.2 The partnership is based on a mutual understanding of strategic aims and objectives; clear accountability; and a recognition of the distinct roles each party contributes. Underpinning the arrangements are the principles set out in the NI Code of Good Practice *[‘Partnerships between Departments and Arm’s-Length Bodies’](#)* which should be read in conjunction with this document. The principles which are laid out in the Code are:

<b>LEADERSHIP</b>
<i>Partnerships work well when Departments and Arm’s Length Bodies demonstrate good leadership to achieve a shared vision and effective delivery of public services. Strong leadership will provide inspiration, instil confidence and trust and empower their respective teams to deliver good outcomes for citizens.</i>
<b>PURPOSE</b>
<i>Partnerships work well when the purpose, objectives and roles of Arm’s Length Bodies and the sponsor department are clear, mutually understood and reviewed on a regular basis. There needs to be absolute clarity about lines of accountability and responsibility between departments and Arm’s Length Bodies. In exercising statutory functions Arm’s Length Bodies need to have clarity about how their purpose and objectives align with those of departments.</i>

<b>ASSURANCE</b>
<i>Partnerships work well when departments adopt a proportionate approach to assurance, based on Arm's Length Bodies' purpose and a mutual understanding of risk. Arm's Length Bodies should have robust governance arrangements in place and in turn departments should give Arm's Length Bodies the autonomy to deliver effectively. Management information should be what is needed to enable departments and Arm's Length Bodies to provide assurance and assess performance.</i>
<b>VALUE</b>
<i>Partnerships work well when departments and Arm's Length Bodies share knowledge, skills and experience in order to enhance their impact and delivery. Arm's Length Bodies are able to contribute to policy making and departmental priorities. There is a focus on innovation, and on how departments and Arm's Length Bodies work together to deliver the most effective policies and services for its customers.</i>
<b>ENGAGEMENT</b>
<i>Partnerships work well when relationships between departments and Arm's Length Bodies are open, honest, constructive and based on trust. There is mutual understanding about each other's objectives and clear expectations about the terms of engagement.</i>

A full copy of the NI Code can be found at Annex 8.

1.3 This document should also be read in conjunction with [guidance](#) on proportionate autonomy which provides an outline of the principles and characteristics for proportionate autonomy. Guidance on proportionate autonomy has been considered in determining the extent of engagement and assurance to be established between NICIE and the DE and this is reflected in this agreement (see Section 11 and Annex 2).

1.4 DE and NICIE are committed to:

- Working together within distinct roles and responsibilities.
- Maintaining focus on successful delivery of Programme for Government outcomes and Ministerial priorities (see also paras 2.6 and 2.7).
- Maintaining open and honest communication and dialogue.
- Being open and transparent in sharing of information and data <sup>1</sup> (as appropriate).

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<sup>1</sup> A Data Sharing Agreement is currently under development.

- Keeping each other informed of any issues and concerns, and of emerging areas of risk, in a timely manner and at the earliest opportunity.
- Supporting and challenging each other on developing policy and delivery [when developing policy this may cut across more than one department].
- Seeking to resolve issues quickly and constructively; and
- Acting at all times in the public interest, represents value for money, and in line with the values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality, and in the best interests of children and young people.

1.5 The effectiveness of the partnership and the associated Engagement Plan will be reviewed each year by the Department and NICIE to assess whether the partnership is operating as intended and to identify any emerging issues/opportunities for enhancement. This can be carried out as part of existing governance arrangements. The Partnership Agreement document itself will be **reviewed formally at least once every three years** to ensure it remains fit for purpose and up to date in terms of current governance frameworks. The formal review will be proportionate to NICIE's size and overall responsibilities and will be published on departmental and NICIE websites as soon as practicable following completion.

1.6 A copy of this agreement has been placed in the Assembly Library<sup>2</sup> and is available on the DE and NICIE websites.

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<sup>2</sup> See [Guidance on the Laying of Papers \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](http://executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

## **NICIE Establishment and Purpose**

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### **2. Statutory Purpose and Strategic Objectives**

- 2.1 NICIE is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established in 1987 as a coordinating and advisory body to promote and support integrated education and to assist parent groups establishing new schools. DE has a duty “to encourage, facilitate and support” Integrated Education under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (“the 1989 Order”) and a duty to “encourage, facilitate and support” Integrated Education under the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (“the 2022 Act”). Under the 1989 Order and the fulfilment of its duty, DE may “pay grants to any body appearing to have as an objective the encouragement or promotion of Integrated Education”. The Department of Education’s authority to fund NICIE is provided by Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. This legislation sets out the general functions of the Department and education boards in relation to Integrated Education, and it is the statutory basis that allows DE to provide funding to NICIE to promote and support the development of Integrated Education across Northern Ireland.
- 2.2 NICIE is a charitable body, incorporated in 1989 as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. For policy/administrative purposes, NICIE is classified as an executive non-departmental public body. For national accounts purposes, NICIE is classified to the central government sector
- 2.3 The role of NICIE is to promote, grow and support Integrated Education and perform a wide range of roles in facilitating the development of Integrated Education in Northern Ireland to:
- (a) deliver educational benefits to children and young persons.
  - (b) to promote awareness and appreciation of human rights.
  - (c) to promote equality of opportunity.
  - (d) to promote good relations; and
  - (e) to promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.

2.4 NICIE have set out their mission and vision statement as follows:

- Mission
- To build peace and reconciliation through Integrated Education. Vision  
A society where children and young people embrace being educated together and are supported to:
  - Be confident to express their own identity and culture.
  - Be respectful of and engage with the identity and culture of others; and
  - Recognise unfairness and stand up for justice.

2.5 The Minister for DE is answerable to the Assembly for the overall performance and delivery of both DE and NICIE. NICIE will therefore support the Minister, and by extension Departmental officials, in relation to the Minister's priorities.

2.6 The Executive's outcome-based approach to delivery recognises the importance of arm's length bodies and departments working collaboratively and together in a joined-up approach to improve overall outcomes and results. DE will agree the objectives, key commitments/actions and key success indicators within NICIE's Corporate/Strategic Plan and Business Plan.

2.7 To that end there is strategic alignment between the aims and objectives of DE and NICIE, and the expected outcomes and results of NICIE and DE. NICIE's aim, approved by DE, is to promote, support and grow development of Integrated Education in Northern Ireland.

2.8 The strategic aims of NICIE, approved by DE, have been identified to support the achievement of DE's Corporate Goals. These are:

- To further promote, grow, and support existing Integrated Education to create measurable change in awareness and understanding, leading to an increase in demand for Integrated schools.
- Support the growth and development of Integrated Education to be an accessible option in all geographical areas and increase the opportunities for children to be educated together.

- Support inclusive practices across Integrated schools to so all learners, including those with Special Education Needs (SEN) can access and benefit from integrated settings.
- To influence the wider educational system to see the educational, societal, and economic benefits in addressing and meeting the demand for Integrated Education.

2.9 The following broad areas of operation have been identified to support the achievement of the Department's corporate goals:

- NICIE will support and encourage an inclusive education throughout Integrated Education school settings so that all learners, including those with SEN, can access and benefit.
- NICIE will provide advice and support to integrated schools through working with EA, CCMS, CCEA, DE and the Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) as appropriate, to contribute to raising standards in Integrated Education at (i) pre-school, (ii) primary and (iii) post-primary.
- NICIE will provide advice and support services to schools, parents and communities wishing to develop or expand Integrated Education provision at (a) pre-school, (b) primary and (c) post-primary school.
- NICIE will advocate on behalf of and support the development of the education workforce within the Integrated Education sector.
- NICIE will ensure that its workforce receives the professional development and support it requires, delivered in a cost-effective manner.
- NICIE will provide effective representation on behalf of the Integrated Education sector by engaging with stakeholders that contribute to the improvement of the learning environment.
- NICIE will, when appropriate, provide strategic input to the area planning process to ensure that children and young people have access to high quality education that is delivered in schools that are educationally and financially stable.
- NICIE should encourage schools within the integrated sector to engage in Shared Education and working with EA, CCMS, CCEA, DE and ETI as appropriate, provide advice and support to implement Shared Education with partner schools.

2.10 NICIE will report on progress in achieving its objectives via the existing Governance and Accountability Review (GAR) reporting mechanisms both in-year and at year-end.

## **NICIE Governance Arrangements**

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### **3. Organisational Status**

- 3.1 NICIE is a legal entity in its own right, employing its own staff, operating at arm's-length from the Department and is allocated its own budget by DE. As a legal entity it must comply with all associated legislation including legislation relating to its employer status.

### **4. Governance Framework**

- 4.1 NICIE is in the process of establishing a [Corporate Governance Framework](#) which reflects all relevant good practice guidance. The framework (which will be published on the NICIE website) will include the governance structures established within NICIE and the internal control and risk management arrangements in place. It will include its Board and Committee Structures. The Department should be satisfied with the framework.
- 4.2 An account of this is included in NICIE's annual Governance Statement together with the NICIE Board's assessment of its compliance with the extant [Corporate Governance Code of Good Practice \(NI\)](#). Any departure from the Corporate Governance Code may be justified if good governance can be achieved by other means. Reasons for departure must be explained clearly in the Governance Statement. The extant Corporate Governance Code of Good Practice (NI) is available on the DoF website.
- 4.3 NICIE is required to follow the principles, rules, guidance and advice in [Managing Public Money Northern Ireland](#). A list of other applicable guidance and instructions which NICIE is required to follow is set out in Annex 6. Good governance should also include positive stakeholder engagement, the building of positive relationships and a listening and learning culture.

## 5. NICIE Board

- 5.1 NICIE is led by a Board, of which four members are appointed by DE in accordance with NICIE's Articles of Association. The NICIE Board operates within the powers, duties and purposes set out in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. Trust Directors shall hold office for a term of up to four years. DE shall appoint four persons on the Board of Directors who will serve on the Board for a maximum period of four years. The length of a Board member's appointment is determined by the Department (in consultation with NICIE) and appointment terms can be staggered to meet succession needs. The appointment process for non-executive Board members complies with the [Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland](#).
- 5.2 The Board of Directors shall not consist of more than 20 members and will be constituted as follows:
- a) Three representatives (the "Trusts' Directors") of the support organisations category of full membership elected from amongst those representing support organisations attending the AGM at which the election members take place.
  - b) Five representatives (the "Schools' Directors") of the schools' category of full membership elected from amongst those members representing schools attending the AGM at which the election take place.
  - c) Two representatives of the Principals (the "Principals' Directors") of school members nominated by the Principals' Committee.
  - d) Two representatives (the "Teachers' Directors") of the teaching staff from integrated schools elected from the representatives of the teacher organisation committee attending the AGM at which the election takes place.
  - e) persons appointed by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (the "DE Nominees").
  - f) One representative (the "Early Years Director") elected by the Early Years Committee.

- 5.3 As Public Appointees Board members are office holders rather than employees, they are not subject to employee terms and conditions. Board appraisal arrangements are set out in paras 15.1 and 15.2 and matters for consideration in dealing with concerns/complaints in respect of Board members are provided in Annex 5.
- 5.4 The Board's Corporate Governance Framework provides further detail on the functions, roles and responsibilities of the organisation and should align closely with this Partnership Agreement.
- 5.5 The purpose of the NICIE Board is to provide effective leadership and strategic direction to the organisation and to ensure that the policies and priorities set by the Minister for DE are implemented. It is responsible for ensuring that the organisation has effective and proportionate governance arrangements in place and an internal control framework which allow risks to be effectively identified and managed. The Board will set the culture and values of the organisation and set the tone for the organisation's engagement with stakeholders.
- 5.6 The Board is responsible for holding the Chief Executive to account for the management of the organisation and the delivery of agreed plans and outcomes. The Board should also however support the Chief Executive as appropriate in the exercise of their duties.
- 5.7 Board members act solely in the interests of NICIE and must not use the Board as a platform to champion their own interests or pursue personal agendas. They occupy a position of trust, and their standards of action and behaviour must be exemplary and in line with the seven principles of public life (Nolan principles). NICIE has a Board Code of Conduct<sup>3</sup> (set out in an Appendix of the Corporate Governance Framework) and there are mechanisms in place to deal with any Board disputes/conflicts to ensure they do not become wider issues that impact on the effectiveness of the Board. A Board Register of Interests is maintained, kept up to date and is publicly available upon request to help provide transparency and promote public confidence in NICIE.

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<sup>3</sup> Currently under review. Link will be added upon completion.

- 5.8 Communication and relationships within the Board are underpinned by a spirit of trust and professional respect. The Board recognises that using consensus to avoid conflict or encouraging members to consistently express similar views or consider only a few alternative views does not encourage constructive debate and does not give rise to an effective Board dynamic.
- 5.9 It is for the Board to decide what information it needs, and in what format, for its meetings/effective operation. If the Board is not confident that it is being fully informed about the organisation this will be addressed by the Chair of the Board as the Board cannot be effective with out-of-date or only partial knowledge.
- 5.10 In order to fulfil their duties, Board members must undertake initial training, and regular ongoing training and development. New Directors are briefed on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Partnership Agreement and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making process, the business plan and recent performance of the charity. Directors are encouraged to attend any appropriate external training events where these facilitate the undertaking of their role. Review of Board skills and development will be a key part of the annual review of Board effectiveness.

## **6. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

- 6.1 A further important aspect of NICIE's governance framework is its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, established in line with the extant [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook \(NI\)](#).
- 6.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's purpose/role is to support the Accounting Officer and Board on governance issues. In line with the handbook the Audit and Risk Assurance Committees focuses on:
- assurance arrangements over governance; financial reporting; annual reports and accounts, including the Governance Statement; and
  - ensuring there is an adequate and effective risk management and assurance framework in place.

6.3 NICIE and DE have agreed arrangements in respect of Audit and Risk Assurance Committees which may include:

- attendance by departmental representatives in an observer capacity (usually the Head of the Integrated Education Irish Medium Team) at NICIE's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings.
- Access to NICIE Audit and Risk Assurance Committee papers and minutes.
- Any input required from NICIE's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to the departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

6.4 **Full compliance with the [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook \(NI\)](#) is an essential requirement.** In the event of significant non-compliance with the handbook's five good practice principles (or other non-compliance) discussion will be required with the Department and a full explanation provided in the annual Governance Statement.

6.5 The extant Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) is available on the DoF website.

## 7. **NICIE Chair**

7.1 The post of Chairperson (hereafter referred to as Chair) is filled from within existing members of the Board. The Chair may be nominated by any member of the Board of Directors, a vote is taken, and a Chair appointed on the basis of the who receives the most votes. There must be at least 12 Directors present at any meeting at which election of a Chair is to take place. The election of a Chair will only be valid if the successful candidate obtains a vote from at least:

- One Trust Director
- Two Schools' Directors
- One DE Nominee
- One Teachers' or Principals' Director.

The Chair shall hold office for two years and shall be eligible for immediate reappointment for one further term and thereafter for further terms not being consecutive. A deputy Chair shall deputise for the Chair and chair such committees of the Board or of the Council as the Board may, subject to Council, direct.

7.2 The Chair is responsible for setting the agenda and managing the Board to enable collaborative and robust discussion of issues. The Chair's role is to develop and motivate the Board and ensure effective relationships in order that the Board can work collaboratively to reach a consensus on decisions. To achieve this, they should ensure:

- The Board has an appropriate balance and diversity of skills appropriate to its business.
- Board members are fully briefed on terms of appointment, duties, rights and responsibilities.
- Board members receive and maintain appropriate training.
- The Minister is advised of NICIE's needs when board vacancies arise.
- There are Board Terms of Reference in place setting out the roles and responsibilities of the Board in line with relevant guidance.
- There is a code of practice for Board members in place, consistent with relevant guidance.

7.3 The role also requires the establishment of an effective working relationship with the Chief Executive that is simultaneously collaborative and challenging. It is important that the Chair and Chief Executive act in accordance with their distinct roles and responsibilities as laid out in Managing Public Money NI and their appointment letters.

7.4 The Chair has a presence in the organisation and cultivates external relationships which provide useful links for the organisation while being mindful of overstepping boundaries and becoming too involved in day-to-day operations or executive activities.

## **8. NICIE Chief Executive**

- 8.1 The role of the NICIE Chief Executive is to run NICIE's business. The Chief Executive is responsible for all executive management matters affecting the organisation and for leadership of the executive management team.
- 8.2 The Chief Executive is designated as NICIE Accounting Officer by the departmental Accounting Officer (see section 12). As Accounting Officer, they are responsible for safeguarding the public funds in their charge and ensuring they are applied only to the purposes for which they were voted and more generally for efficient and economical administration.
- 8.3 The Chief Executive is accountable to the Board for NICIE's performance and delivery of outcomes and targets and is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Board and its Committees. The Chief Executive is not a member of the Board but, with their agreement, may attend Council meetings and meetings of its committees. The Chief Executive maintains a dialogue with the Chair on the important strategic issues facing the organisation and for proposing Board agendas to the Chair to reflect these. The Chief Executive ensures effective communication with stakeholders and communication on this to the Board. The Chief Executive also ensures that the Chair is alerted to forthcoming complex, contentious or sensitive issues, including risks affecting the organisation.
- 8.4 The Chief Executive acts as a role model to other executives by exhibiting open support for the Chair and Board members and the contribution they make. The Chair and Chief Executive have agreed how they will work together in practice, understanding and respecting each other's role, including the Chief Executive's responsibility as Accounting Officer.
- 8.5 Further detail on the role and responsibilities of the Chief Executive are as laid out in Managing Public Money NI and their Accounting Officer appointment letter.

- 8.6 The Chief Executive is responsible for the day-to-day management of NICIE staff, and for determining the staffing structure to meet operational needs and to support DE when carrying out its statutory functions. In doing this, the Chief Executive will have regard to the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, the need for forward planning within the parameters of any running cost limits or efficiency measures that may be set by the Department.
- 8.7 Subject to any specific conditions set by the Department, and sufficient budget cover being available to ensure that the creation of any additional posts does not incur forward commitments which will exceed the ability to pay for them, the Chief Executive has the authority to reorganise/set staffing structures below Executive Leadership Team/Senior Staff Structure level to best meet business need. For reorganisation above these levels<sup>4</sup>, Departmental approval is required to reorganise/set staffing structures. In managing the NICIE staffing structure, the Chief Executive will ensure consistency with established employment practice and legislation.
- 8.8 The Chief Executive is responsible for employee and industrial relations within NICIE. The Chief Executive is committed to fostering good employee and industrial relations as an important aid to achievement of NICIE objectives and will ensure effective communication and consultation with staff and their recognised trade union representatives.

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<sup>4</sup> Senior management team structure starts at NJC Point 35

## Role of the DE

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### 9. Partnership Working with NICIE

- 9.1 DE and NICIE are part of a total delivery system, within the same Ministerial portfolio. The partnership between DE and NICIE is open, honest, constructive and based on trust. There is mutual understanding of each other's objectives and clear expectations on the terms of engagement.
- 9.2 In exercising its functions NICIE has absolute clarity on how its purpose and objectives align with those of DE. There is also a shared understanding of the risks that may impact on each other, and these are reflected in respective Risk Registers.
- 9.3 There is a regular exchange of skills and experience between DE and NICIE and where possible joint programme/project delivery boards/arrangements. NICIE may also be involved as a partner in policy/strategy development and provides advice on policy implementation/the impact of policies in practice.
- 9.4 The Department of Finance (DoF) has established, on behalf of the Assembly, a delegated authority framework which sets out the circumstances where prior DoF approval is required before expenditure can be occurred or commitments entered. The Accounting Officer of DE has established an internal framework of delegated authority for the Department and its ALBs which apply to NICIE. Other specific approval requirements established in respect of NICIE as set out at Annex 3.
- 9.5 Once NICIE's budget has been approved by DE [and subject to any restrictions imposed by statute] NICIE shall have authority to incur expenditure approved in the budget without further reference to the Department. Inclusion of any planned and approved expenditure in the budget shall not however remove the need to seek formal departmental approval where proposed expenditure is outside the delegated limits (as laid out in Annex 3) or is for new schemes not previously agreed. Nor does it negate the need to follow due processes laid out in guidance

contained in Managing Public Money NI and [Better Business Cases NI](#) (previously NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation).

## **10. Lead Official**

- 10.1 DE has appointed the Director of Collaborative Education and Youth to manage the relationship with NICIE and ensure effective partnership working. Engagement between the Department and NICIE will be co-ordinated, collaborative and consistent. A clear sense of collaboration and partnership will be communicated and promoted to staff in both the Department and NICIE to facilitate and encourage mutual understanding and support.
- 10.2 The Director of Collaborative Education and Youth, supported by the Integrated Education Team, will take the lead on performance, risk management, governance, finance (i.e. budget holder role) and communication issues with NICIE; the Director of Finance can be engaged as needed, to support the Director of Collaborative Education and Youth for finance-related issues; the Director of Education Workforce Development will take the lead on workforce planning issues, terms and conditions of service and public sector pay policy and pensions. The Director of Sustainable Schools Policy and Planning Directorate will take the lead on area planning issues.
- 10.3 The lead senior official(s) are the policy lead(s) for the policy and delivery issues relating to NICIE's business and has a clear understanding of NICIE's responsibilities for policy implementation/operational delivery and the relevant audiences/stakeholders involved.
- 10.4 The lead senior official(s) will ensure that where there are departmental staff changes, time is taken to ensure they have a full understanding of NICIE's business and challenges.

## **11. Annual Engagement Plan**

- 11.1 The Department and NICIE will agree an engagement plan before the start of each business year. The Annual Engagement Plan (Annex 2) will set out the timing and nature of engagement between NICIE and the Department. The engagement plan will be specific to NICIE and should not stray into operational oversight.
- 11.2 Engagement between the Department's lead official/their teams and NICIE will be centred on partnership working, understanding of shared risks and working together on business developments that align with policy objectives.
- 11.3 NICIE will work in collaboration and partnership with the Department to prepare corporate and business plans. There should be good high level strategic alignment between DE and NICIE plans. Once approved it will be the Board of NICIE that primarily holds the Chief Executive to account for delivery and performance. DE also has a monitoring role and holds NICIE (as a Corporate Body) accountable for its performance. DE will engage with NICIE on areas of strategic interest, linking departmental policy and NICIE delivery of policy intent.
- 11.4 The Annual Engagement Plan will also reference the agreed management and financial information to be shared over the course of a year. The aim will be to ensure clear understanding of why information is necessary and how it will be used. Where the same, or similar information is required for internal governance information requirements will be aligned so that a single report can be used for both purposes. In addition, the engagement plan should consider opportunities for learning and development, growth and actions which could help achieve better outcomes.

## **12. Departmental Accounting Officer**

- 12.1 The departmental Accounting Officer is accountable to the NI Assembly for the issue of grant in aid to NICIE. They have designated the Chief Executive of NICIE as NICIE Accounting Officer and respective responsibilities of the departmental Accounting Officer, and the NICIE Accounting Officer are set out in [Chapter 3](#) of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland. The departmental Accounting Officer

may withdraw the NICIE Accounting Officer designation if they conclude that the NICIE Accounting Officer is no longer a fit person to carry out the responsibilities of an Accounting Officer or that it is otherwise in the public interest that the designation be withdrawn. In such circumstances the NICIE Board will be given a full account of the reasons for withdrawal and a chance to make representations. Withdrawal of NICIE Accounting Officer status would bring into question employment as Chief Executive and the Chair should engage with the Department should such circumstances arise.

12.2 As outlined in section 8, the NICIE Chief Executive is accountable to the NICIE Board for his/her stewardship of NICIE. This includes advising the Board on matters of financial propriety, regularity, prudent and economical administration, efficiency and effectiveness.

12.3 The departmental Accounting Officer must be informed if the judgement of the NICIE Accounting Officer (on matters for which they are responsible) is overridden by the NICIE Board. The NICIE Accounting Officer must also take action if the NICIE Board is contemplating a course that would infringe the requirement for financial propriety, regularity, prudent and economical administration, efficiency or effectiveness. In all other regards, the departmental Accounting Officer has no day-to-day involvement with NICIE or its Chief Executive.

12.4 In line with DoF requirements, the NICIE Accounting Officer will provide a periodic declaration of fitness to act as Accounting Officer to the departmental Accounting Officer as part of the annual Governance Statement.

### **13. Attendance at Public Accounts Committee**

13.1 The NICIE Chief Executive/Accounting Officer may be summoned to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to give evidence on the discharge of their responsibilities as Accounting Officer (as laid out in their Accounting Officer appointment letter) on issues arising from the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) studies or reports following the annual audit of accounts.

13.2 The Chair may also, on occasion, be called to give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee on such relevant issues arising within the C&AG's studies or reports, in relation to the role and actions taken by the Board, where appropriate.

13.3 In addition, the DE Accounting Officer may be summoned to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to give evidence on the discharge of their responsibilities as departmental Accounting Officer with overarching responsibility for NICIE. In such circumstances, the departmental accounting Officer may therefore expect to be questioned on their responsibilities to ensure that:

- There is a clear strategic control framework for NICIE.
- Sufficient and appropriate management and financial controls are in place to safeguard public funds.
- The nominated Accounting Officer is fit to discharge his or her responsibilities.
- There are suitable internal audit arrangements.
- Accounts are prepared in accordance with the relevant legislation and any accounting direction; and
- Intervention is made, where necessary, in situations where the ALB Accounting Officer's advice on transactions in relation to regularity, propriety or value for money is overruled by the body's Board or its Chair.

## Assurance Framework

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### 14. Autonomy and Proportionality

- 14.1 DE will ensure that NICIE has the autonomy to deliver effectively, recognising its status as a separate legal entity which has its own Board and governance arrangements. Guidance on proportionate autonomy has been considered in determining the extent of engagement and assurance established between NICIE and the DE and is reflected in this agreement.
- 14.2 A proportionate approach to assurance will be taken based on NICIE's overall purpose, business and budget and a mutual understanding of risk. The approach will include an agreed process through which the NICIE Accounting Officer provides written assurance to the Department that the public funds and organisational assets for which they are personally responsible are safeguarded, have been managed with propriety and regularity, and use of public funds represents value for money.
- 14.3 Subject to the NICIE Articles of Association, DE may attend meetings of the NICIE Board or its sub committees in an observer capacity where this is considered appropriate for assurance purposes and to support effective partnership working.
- 14.4 Recognising the governance arrangements in place within the organisation, the NICIE Accounting Officer will arrange for their written assurance to be discussed at the NICIE Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and presented to the NICIE Board prior to submission to the Department where possible. If not possible, or practicable, the Chair of NICIE Board should have sight of the assurance statement, prior to being submitted to the Department.
- 14.5 For the end-year Governance Statement, the NICIE Chair will provide written confirmation that the NICIE Accounting Officer's formal assurance has been considered by the Board and is reflective of NICIE's current position.

14.6 In addition to the NICIE Accounting Officer's written assurance, the Department will take assurance from the following key aspects of NICIE's own governance framework:

- Annual Review of Board Effectiveness (see section 15 below).
- Completion of Board Appraisals which confirm Board member effectiveness.
- Internal Audit assurance and External Quality Assessment of the Internal Audit function.
- Externally audited Annual Report and Accounts, reviewed/considered by the NICIE Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

## 15. Board Effectiveness

15.1 The NICIE Chair will ensure that the NICIE Board undertakes an annual review of [Board Effectiveness](#) which encompasses committees established by the Board.

15.2 The Chair will discuss the outcome of the annual review of Board Effectiveness with the lead official to ensure a partnership approach to any improvements identified. This will inform the annual programme of Board training/development and discussions in respect of Board composition for any new appointments and succession planning.

15.3 In addition to the annual review of Board Effectiveness NICIE will undertake an externally facilitated review of Board effectiveness at **least once every three years** covering the performance of the Board, its Committees and individual Board members. The Chair will liaise with the Department to identify a suitably skilled facilitator for the external review (this can be a peer review and should be proportionate) and will share the findings/outcome report with the Department on completion of the review.

## 16. Board Appraisals

- 16.1 The Chair of NICIE will conduct an annual appraisal in respect of each Board member which will also inform the annual programme of Board training/development. The Chair will engage with the Chief Executive/lead official as appropriate on improvements identified through the appraisal process and the annual training/development programme.
- 16.2 DE only requires appraisals for DE appointed members to be shared with the Department; however, it is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that annual evaluations take place for all Board members. NICIE should therefore have arrangements in place to conduct assessments for non-DE appointed members (whether this be through the Chair, or a designated Chairperson of a Committee of the Council, as appropriate). There will be close engagement between the Chair and the lead official on improvements identified through the appraisal process.
- 16.3 Appraisals of the Chair are not requested by DE, as this position is not a Ministerial appointment. If requested, the Minister can arrange to meet the NICIE Chair to discuss the performance of NICIE, its current and future activities, and any policy developments and reports relevant to performance and activities.

## **17. Internal Audit Assurance**

- 17.1 NICIE is required to establish and maintain arrangements for an internal audit function that operates in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards ([GIAS](#)). DE must be satisfied with the competence and qualifications of the Head of Internal Audit and that the requirements for approving appointments are in accordance with GIAS.
- 17.2 In the event that the internal audit function is contracted out NICIE shall ensure DE is satisfied that the contract specification for the internal audit service meets the requirements of GIAS.
- 17.3 NICIE will provide its internal audit strategy, periodic audit plans and annual audit report, including the Head of Internal Audit's opinion on risk management, control

and governance to the Department. NICIE will ensure DE's internal audit team have complete right of access to all relevant records. This applies whether the internal audit function is provided in-house or is contracted out.

17.4 NICIE will ensure regular, periodic self-assessments of the internal audit function in line with GIAS and will share these with the Department. NICIE will also liaise with the Department on the External Quality Assessment (EQA) of the internal audit function which (in line with GIAS) is required to be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified independent assessor. Corporate Services & Governance Directorate in DE should be consulted in relation to the Terms of Reference for the EQA, and a copy of the EQA report provided to them once completed.

17.5 NICIE will alert the Department to any less than satisfactory audit reports at the earliest opportunity on an ongoing basis. NICIE will also alert the Department to a less than satisfactory annual opinion from the Head of Internal Audit at the earliest opportunity. NICIE and the Department will then engage closely on actions required to address the less than satisfactory opinion in order to move NICIE to a satisfactory position as soon as possible.

17.6 The Department will take assurance from the fact that NICIE has met the requirements of PSIAS and has a satisfactory annual opinion from the Head of Internal Audit as part of its overall assurance assessment. DE's Internal Audit Unit may, in exceptional circumstances, undertake reviews within NICIE at the request of the Department.

17.7 NICIE's Accounting Officer has a responsibility to bring to the immediate attention of the Department's Principal Accounting Officer any significant issue including those relating to serious financial concerns, systems weaknesses of regularity and propriety.

17.8 NICIE will publish and maintain up-to-date policies and guidance on Anti-Fraud, Complaints handling and Raising Concerns at Work etc. on its website.

## **18. Externally Audited Annual Report and Accounts**

- 18.1 NICIE is required to prepare an Annual Report and Accounts in line with the Government Financial Reporting Manual ([FReM](#)) issued by the Department of Finance (DoF) and the specific Accounts Direction issued by DE, and in accordance with the deadlines specified.
- 18.2 The C&AG will arrange to audit NICIE's annual accounts and will issue an independent opinion on the accounts. The C&AG will liaise with NICIE on whether the NIAO or a commercial auditor will undertake the audit on her behalf. The final decision rests with the C&AG. The C&AG passes the accounts to DE who shall lay/ present/deposit them before the Northern Ireland Assembly together with NICIE's annual report.
- 18.3 The annual report will include the statement of accounts for that year along with the corresponding report of the C&AG, a report on the exercise of its functions for that year, and such other information as DE may require. NICIE must submit to DE a draft of the annual report by such date as DE may direct, to enable DE to lay the report before the Assembly in a timely manner.
- 18.4 The C&AG will also provide a Report to Those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) to NICIE which will be shared with the Department.
- 18.5 NICIE will alert the Department to any potential qualification of the accounts at the earliest opportunity. In the event of a qualified audit opinion or significant issues reported in the RTTCWG the Department will engage with NICIE on actions required to address the qualification/significant issues.
- 18.6 The Department will take assurance from the external audit process and an unqualified position as part of its overall assurance assessment.
- 18.7 The C&AG may carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which NICIE has used its resources in discharging its

functions. The C&AG may also carry out thematic examinations that encompass the functions of NICIE.

18.8 For the purpose of audit and any other examinations, the C&AG has statutory access to documents as provided for under Articles 3 and 4 of the [Audit and Accountability \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2003](#).

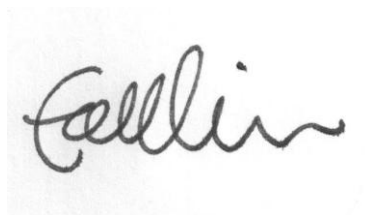
18.9 Where making payment of a grant, or drawing up a contract, NICIE should ensure that it includes a clause which makes the grant or contract conditional upon the recipient or contractor providing access to the C&AG in relation to documents relevant to the transaction. Where subcontractors are likely to be involved, it should also be made clear that the requirements extend to them.

## Signatories

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NICIE and DE agree to work in partnership with each other in line with the Northern Ireland Code of Good Practice '**Partnerships between Departments and Arm's-Length Bodies**' and the arrangements set out in this Agreement.

Signed



Eamon Quinn (NICIE Chair)

Date 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026

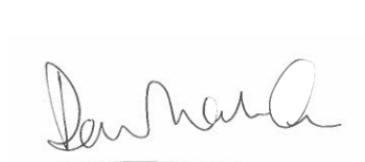
Signed



Sean Pettis (NICIE Chief Executive)

Date 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Signed



David Malcolm (Permanent Secretary)

Date 14 May 2026



## Annex 1 - Applicable Legislation

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The Department of Education (DE) has a statutory duty “to encourage, facilitate and support” the development of Integrated Education under Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989<sup>5</sup> (“the Order”). Article 64 also provides that the Department may “pay grants to any body appearing to have as an objective the encouragement or promotion of Integrated Education”.

Section 3 of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022<sup>6</sup>, requires the Department to consult with any-body appearing to have as its objective the encouragement or promotion of integrated education when exercising any function relating to integrated education which is defined in Section 1 of the Act. The Department has designated NICIE as a relevant body under the Act

Article 20 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998<sup>7</sup> facilitates the ability to create Integrated Nursery Schools.

Article 13 of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement 1998<sup>8</sup> states, ‘*An essential aspect of the reconciliation process is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and **encourage integrated education and mixed housing***’.

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<sup>5</sup>[The Education Reform \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1989](#)

<sup>6</sup>[Integrated Education Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

<sup>7</sup>[Education \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1998](#)

<sup>8</sup>[The Belfast Agreement 1998](#)

## Annex 2 – Illustrative Annual Engagement Plan

Good engagement is one of the key principles in the Partnership Code, underpinning the other principles of: Leadership; Purpose; Assurance; and Value.

As laid out in the Code, partnerships work well when relationships between departments and ALBs are open, transparent, honest, constructive and based on trust and when there is mutual understanding of each other's objectives and clear expectations about the terms of engagement.

The template provided outlines the key areas of engagement between DE and NICIE. The template is not intended to be prescriptive and should be completed collaboratively and agreed between the Department and NICIE.

<b>Engagement Plan 2025/26</b>		
<b>Policy Development and Delivery</b>		
<i>Add details of the planned engagement between the ALB and the Department in relation to development and monitoring of existing and new areas of policy.</i>		
<b>Policy Area</b>	<b>Frequency/Timing</b>	<b>Lead Departmental/ALB Officials</b>
IE Strategy Development & Reporting	TBC	IE/NICIE Representatives
<b>Strategic Planning</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Departmental/ALB Official</b>
ALB Strategic Planning Workshops – encompassing strategic planning and risk identification. Informed by input on departmental priorities/plans and risk areas	Sufficiently well in advance of the Business Year to inform development of the Business Plan for the year ahead	
Engagement on the draft Business Plan and identification of areas of	<b>By January 2026</b>	<b>IE/EGT/NICIE</b>

strategic interest to the Department to inform further scheduled engagement during the year		
Submission/presentation of the ALB Business Plan		
Approval of the ALB Business Plan		
Engagement on areas of strategic interest regarding the ALB Business Plan during the year		

### Joint Working

*Add details of any interchange opportunities, and/or joint programme/project delivery boards*

Activity	Frequency/Timing	Lead Departmental/ALB Official

### Board Appointments

*Add details of any engagement related to Public Appointment exercises*

Activity	Date	Lead Departmental/ALB Official

### Chief Executive Recruitment

*Add details of any engagement related to the recruitment of a new Chief Executive (if anticipated during the year ahead). ALBs should engage with the Department at an early stage in the event of the recruitment of a new Chief Executive. While recognising the role of the Board as employer, the Department will work closely with the ALB in the recruitment and selection process in line with extant guidance.*

Activity	Date	Lead Departmental/ALB Official

## Assurances

*Add details of the timetable for submission of key assurance sources and any other assurance related activity*

<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Departmental/ALB Official</b>
Outcome of the Review of Board Effectiveness	Annual review with an externally facilitated review at least once every three years	Head of IE/NICIE Chair
Planning for the externally facilitated review of Board Effectiveness	Externally facilitated review at least once every three years	Head of IE/NICIE Chair
Board Appraisals and planned training/development for Board members	Following the end of the Business year.	Head of IE/NICIE Chair
Chair Appraisal	Following the end of the Business year. After Board Appraisals have been completed by the Chair and the annual Review of Board Effectiveness has concluded	
Departmental Attendance at ARAC	Attendance as observer 1xpa	Head of IE or IE Representative
Assurance Statement	Specify frequency. In most cases this is bi-annual.	DE EGT/IE/NICIE CEO
Draft Governance Statement		DE EGT/IE/NICIE CEO
Annual Report and Accounts	Accounts Direction to NICIE– February  Draft Accounts of NICIE submitted to DE by the 17 <sup>th</sup> working day of April.	Head of FRT - DE  CEO / Chief Finance Officer – NICIE

	<p>Liaise and organise laying or presenting Accounts in the Assembly – DoF advise of deadline (usually early July)</p> <p>RoFP Consolidation Pack usually submitted to DE – in line with draft accounts submission date.</p>	
Report to those Charged with Governance		
Engagement on other planned NIAO reports		
Head of Internal Audit Annual report/Opinion		
Internal Audit Strategy and Plans		
Internal Audit External Quality Assessment	To be conducted at least once every five years	
<b>Budget Management</b> <i>Add details of the information and returns to be provided.</i>		
<b>Item and Purpose</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Departmental/ALB Official</b>
Engagement on budget requirements and Forecast Expenditure for the Financial Year		
Departmental approval of the annual budget		
Monthly Financial Management Returns		
Annual and Monthly Cash Forecast	Annual Cash Forecast	CEO / Chief Finance Officer – NICIE

	<p>commissioned by DE FRT, returns due at end of April/early May.</p> <p>Commissioned by DE FRT, Monthly Cash Forecast return is due the first week of the month, i.e. July forecast will be due first week of June.</p>	<p>Head of FRT – DE</p> <p>IE</p>
Monitoring Round Returns		
Provisional Outturn		
Final Outturn		
Losses and special payments	<p>Reported in line with delegated authority and in the NICIE Annual Report and Accounts.</p> <p>All losses and special payments outside the delegated authority of NICIE require Departmental approval.</p>	<p>CEO / Chief Finance Officer – NICIE</p> <p>Head of FRT - DE</p>
External Consultancy	Annual update of spend at 31 March each year	<p>Chief Finance Officer – NICIE</p> <p>Head of FRT - DE</p>
<p><b>Other</b></p> <p><i>Tailor as required to reflect the specific requirements</i></p>		
<b>Item and Purpose</b>	<b>Submission Date</b>	<b>Lead Departmental/ALB Official</b>
Accounting Officer - Fitness to Act as Accounting Officer	Periodic (specify) request from the departmental Accounting Officer	

Fraud Reporting	Immediate reporting of all frauds (proven or suspected including attempted fraud	Department will report frauds immediately to DoF and C&AG.
Fraud Reporting	Annual fraud return commissioned by DoF on fraud and theft suffered by NICIE.	
Media management protocols – independence of ALB to engage with media/announcements of corporate and policy communications significant to ALB - arrangements to share press releases where relevant – ensure no surprises.		
Preparation of business cases – departments and ALBs to consider working together to share expertise where appropriate.		
Whistleblowing cases/ Speaking Up/Raising Concerns.		

### Review of the Partnership Arrangement

*Tailor as required to reflect the specific requirements*

<b>Item and Purpose</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Departmental/ALB Official</b>
Light touch review of the Partnership Agreement	Schedule following the end of the Business Year	1 year after agreement. Head of IE/NICIE CEO
Formal review of the Partnership Agreement	To be conducted once every three years	

## Annex 3 - Delegations

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### Delegated authorities

NICIE shall obtain the Department's prior written approval before:

- Entering into any undertaking to incur any expenditure that falls outside the delegations, or which is not provided for in the ALB's annual budget as approved by the Department.
- incurring expenditure for any purpose that is or might be considered novel or contentious, or which has or could have significant future cost implications.
- making any significant change in the scale of operation or funding of any initiative or scheme previously approved by the Department.
- making any change of policy or practice which has wider financial implications that might prove repercussive, or which might significantly affect the future level of resources required; or
- carrying out policies that go against the principles, rules, guidance and advice in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

### NICIE's Specific Delegated Authorities

Table 1 – Delegated Authority

	NICIE £000s
IT	<50
Capital	<10
External Consultancy	-
Other	<30
Commercial Insurance	-
PPP	-

Table 2 – Procurement Control Limits

Thresholds (excluding VAT)	Number/Type of tender required
Up to £10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide evidence that 2 prices have been sought, where this is possible<sup>9</sup>.</li></ul>

<sup>9</sup> For some specialist supplies or services there may only be one supplier in the market. If this is the case, sufficient justification for not seeking a second price check should be documented.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance is included at <a href="#">PPN 04/21</a> (Revised 2025)</li> </ul>
£10,000 to £50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 written quotations are sought, where this is possible.</li> </ul>
£50,000 to UK thresholds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advertise on eTendersNI.</li> <li>For guidance see <a href="#">eTendersNI   Department of Finance</a></li> </ul>
Above UK thresholds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advertise on eTendersNI and procure in accordance with the terms of the SLA with CPD or other recognised CoPE.</li> <li>EU Directives apply – advertise with OJEU.</li> </ul>

## Economic Appraisal

The principles of economic appraisal should be applied in all cases where expenditure is proposed, whether the proposal involves capital or current expenditure, or both. The effort put into economic appraisal should be commensurate with the size or importance of the needs or resources under consideration. However, NICIE should undertake a comprehensive business case of all projects involving expenditure of £50,000 and over.

### Where the minimum number of quotation/tenders is not obtained

Where NICIE is unable to obtain a sufficient number of tenders, the accounting officer of NICIE must confirm agreement to the award of the direct award contract, in compliance with [CPD Procurement Guidance](#).

**All direct award contracts in respect of the use of external consultants must have Departmental Accounting Officer approval and Ministerial approval, in addition to NICIE Accounting Officer approval.**

Any novel and/or potentially contentious projects, regardless of the amount of expenditure, require the approvals of DE and DoF.

## APPROVAL OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

The appraisal of Information Technology (IT) projects should include the staffing and other resource implications.

The principles of appraisal, evaluation and management apply equally to proposals supported by information communication technology (ICT) as to all other areas of public expenditure. ICT-enabled projects should be appraised and evaluated according to the general guidance in the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation ([NIGEAE](#)).

The purchase of IT equipment and systems should be in line with the guidance on Programme/Project Management (PPM) Principles, and be subject to competitive tendering unless there are convincing reasons to the contrary. The form of competition

should be appropriate to the value and complexity of the project, and in line with the Procurement Control Limits in Table 2. Delegated authority for each IT Project is set out in Table 1.

ICT projects valued in excess of NICIE’s delegated limit (£50k) must be submitted for approval to the DE ICT Programme Board, following approval of the business case and clearance through the DE sponsor team.

## ENGAGEMENT OF CONSULTANTS

### General

NICIE MUST NOT appoint consultants in a direct award contract without the prior approval of DE’s Accounting Officer. In addition, **all proposed external consultancy projects, must secure Ministerial approval in advance.** In the absence of a Minister, DE will advise of the necessary approval level(s) required.

### Economic appraisal

A business case should be prepared for all consultancy assignments expected to exceed £10,000. A proportionate business case should be prepared for all assignments below this threshold.

## LOSSES AND SPECIAL PAYMENTS

NICIE Chief Executive has delegated authority to write off losses and make special payments up to:

Type of loss/special payment	Maximum amount per case/incident £
Cash losses	300
Stores/Equipment losses	500
Constructive losses and fruitless payments	300
Compensation payments:	
(i) Made under legal obligation, e.g. by Court Order	(i) 300 (plus reasonable legal expenses)
(ii) For damage to personal property of staff	(ii) 50
(iii) Where written legal advice is that NICIE should not fight a court action because it is unlikely that it would win.	(iii) 300
Claims abandoned or waiver of claim	300
Extra contractual payments	300
Ex gratia payments (Pensions payments are not covered by this threshold)	50
Extra statutory and extra regulatory payments	no delegation all proposals must be submitted to the DE for approval
Overpayments of salaries and wages	300

The prior approval of DE must be obtained for amounts above these values.

The Chief Executive may authorise gifts up to the value of £25 – these gifts shall not be used for the benefit of staff or members.

Records of gifts should be kept in line with Internal Audit requirements and follow IFRS reporting rules. If NICIE is in any doubt whether a particular expenditure counts as publicity or a gift, it should consult DE.

Proposals for making gifts or other special payments (including write-offs) beyond these limits must have the prior approval of DE (and where necessary DoF).

### **Notation of Account**

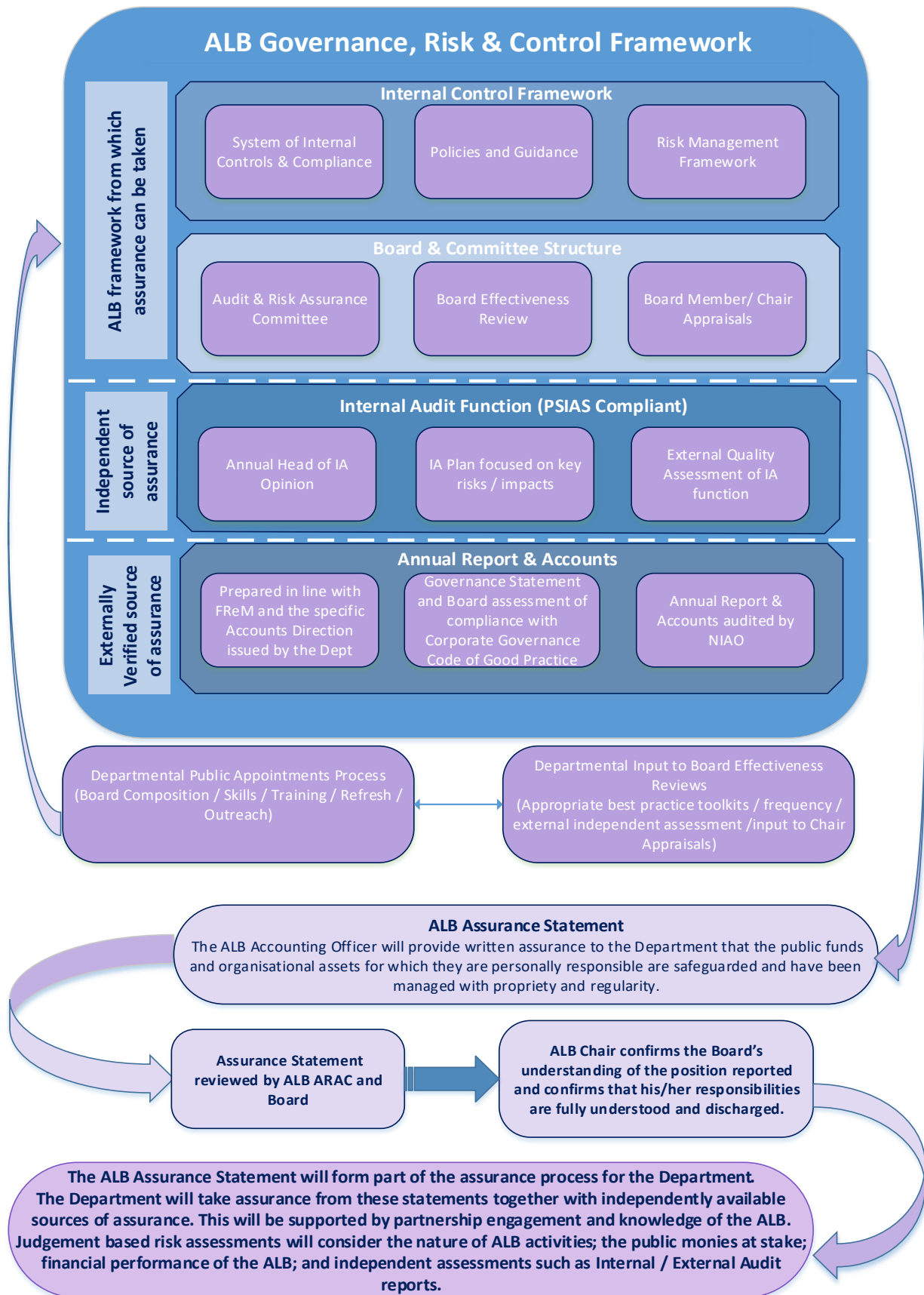
Losses should be brought to the Assembly's attention at the earliest opportunity normally by noting in the Annual Accounts. A Losses Statement and/or a Special Payment Statement is required in the Annual Accounts where total losses or special payments exceed £250,000. Individual losses or special payments of more than £250,000 should be noted separately. Losses and special payments should be reported on an accrual's basis.

### **Losses and Special Payments Register**

Details of all losses and special payments should be recorded in a Losses and Special Payments Register, which will be available to auditors. The Register should be kept up-to-date and should show evidence of the approval by the Chief Executive and DE, where appropriate.

***These delegations shall not be altered without the prior agreement of the department and, where applicable, DoF.***

## Annex 4 – Illustrative System of Assurance



## **Annex 5 – Concerns/Complaints in respect of Board members**

In line with the Northern Ireland Code of Good Practice and the arrangements in this Partnership Agreement the approach to concerns/complaints raised in respect of NICIE Board members should be transparent and collaborative. The principle of early and open engagement is important, with the Department made aware of any concerns/complaints as soon as practicable.

While Board Members are Public Appointees/office holders rather than NICIE employees a NICIE employee may utilise NICIE's grievance procedure/other HR procedure to raise a complaint against a Board member. The NICIE employee raising the grievance should expect this to be handled in line with NICIE's HR procedures.

Concerns/complaints might also be raised through:

- Raising Concerns/Whistleblowing arrangements.
- Complaints processes.
- Directly with NICIE or the Department.

Where a concern/complaint is received within NICIE in respect of an individual Board Member this should be provided to the NICIE Chair who should notify the Department at the outset in order that lead responsibility for handling the complaint/concern is clear in advance.

Where a concern/complaint relates to the NICIE Chair, NICIE should notify the Department at the outset for the Department to determine the approach to handling the complaint/concern.

Differences of view in relation to matters which fall within the Board's responsibilities are a matter for the Board to resolve through consensus-based decision making in the best interests of the NICIE.

Exceptionally a concern/complaint may be raised by a Board Member about a fellow Board Member or a senior member of NICIE staff. The NICIE Chair should notify the Department at the outset to ensure that arrangements for handling the

concern/complaint are clear. The Department may determine that it should make arrangements to deal with the concern/complaint. This will be agreed at the outset.

Arrangements for concerns/complaints in respect of Board members should be reflected in all relevant procedures, including Standing Orders and Board Operating Frameworks.

## **Annex 6 - Applicable Guidance**

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The following guidance is applicable to NICIE.

### **Guidance issued by the Department of Finance**

- [Managing Public Money Northern Ireland \(MPMNI\)](#)
- [HMT Orange Book](#)
- [DoF Governance and Risk Guidance](#)
- [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook](#)
- [Global Internal Audit Standards \(GIAS\)](#)
- [Good Governance – Effective Relationships between Departments and their Arm's Length Bodies](#)
- [Accounting officer appointments, roles and responsibilities](#)
- [Better Business Cases Northern Ireland \(BBCNI\)](#)
- [Anti-Fraud Guidance and Managing the Risk of Fraud](#)
- NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation
- Dear Consolidation Officer and Dear Consolidation Manager Letters incl. Letter of Appointment
- [Government Financial Reporting Manual \(FReM\)](#)
- Requirement to complete a Governance Statement
- [Guidance for preparation and publication of Annual Report and Accounts](#)
- [Procurement Guidance](#)
- [Acceptance and Provision of Gifts and Hospitality](#)
- [Public Bodies – A Guide for NI Departments](#)
- [Corporate Governance in central government departments – code of good practice](#)
- [On Board: A Guide for Board Members of Public Bodies](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Board Members](#)
- International Financial Reporting Standards

## **Other Guidance and Best Practice**

- Specific guidance issued by the Department
- EU Delegations
- Recommendations made by the NI Audit Office
- NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee
- NIAO Good Practice Guides
- Asset Management Strategy
- Guidance issued by the Executive's Asset Management Unit
- NI Public Services Ombudsman guidance
- Equality Commission (NI)
- Information Commissioner Office
- Commissioner for Public Appointments (NI)

## **Annex 7 – Role of the Minister**

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### **Role of the Minister**

The Chair of NICIE is responsible to the Minister. Communication between the Board and the Minister should normally be through the Chair.

The departmental Accounting Officer is responsible for advising the relevant Minister on a number of issues including the NICIE objectives and targets, budgets and performance.

In addition to being answerable to the Assembly as laid out in paragraph 2.4, the Minister is also responsible for:

- Agreeing the strategic direction and overall policies and priorities for NICIE as reflected in the PfG.
- Setting NICIE budget; and
- Appointment of DE non-executive board members.

## **Annex 8 – Partnerships between Departments and Arm’s Length Bodies: NI Code of Good Practice**

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### **NI Code of Good Practice**